

Wisconsin Wildlife Federation

Chairman Kedzie and members of the Senate Natural Resources Committee, the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation is asking that you to support Assembly Bill 104 We would like to thank Rep. LeMahieu and Senator Kedzie for their lead sponsorship of this bill.

AB 104 requires that at least three of the seven Board members must have had either hunting, fishing or trapping licenses at least seven out of the last ten years. The proposed hunting, fishing and trapping license requirement in AB 104 has been met by the membership of the Natural Resources Board and its predecessor agency, the Conservation Commission, from 1928 through the membership of today's current Board. Today's NRB has at least five members that meet the licensing criteria.

If that is the case, why is it important to pass this bill. During my tenure as DNR Secretary, I had the opportunity to see what happened in fish and wildlife agencies in other states. Many of these agencies are governed by citizen boards similar to the DNR Board. As states have become more urbanized, there has been a trend for these boards to have more non-hunting, fishing and trapping members appointed to the boards. As a result they have actually adopted anti-hunting, fishing and trapping policies. This occurred in the State of Colorado, where the Colorado Division of Wildlife had a board at one point that was anti-hunting. I heard the absolute frustration of the professional resource managers in that Division on the difficulty of managing wildlife in that state with the anti-hunting composition of their citizen board. This also occurred at one point in the State of California. AB 104 will add protection to assure that this will not happen in Wisconsin.

AB 104 also requires and that at least one of the Board members have an agricultural background. The Federation has been a strong supporter of this for several years. The proposed agricultural background requirement has been met on the Natural Resources Board and its predecessor, the Conservation Commission, since at least the mid-1960s. From my personal experience during my tenure at the DNR I learned that it was very valuable to have a Board member with agricultural experience right at the table as the Board made decisions that had major impact on agriculture in the state. Their input was critical to deer management, nonpoint pollution regulations, woodlot forestry management, wetland regulations and many other critical programs at DNR. As an example, in the southern two-thirds of the state, the great majority of fish and wildlife habitat exists on private agricultural lands. Without the cooperation of farmers it is not possible to effectively manage fish and wildlife habitat in Wisconsin. That is true for many programs in DNR. Having the input and the knowledge of a Board member with agricultural background is critical to insure the success of the many programs that DNR has that impact agriculture.

For these reasons, the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation respectfully requests that you

approve AB 104 and send it to the full Senate for a vote.

Thank you for your consideration.

George Meyer
Executive Director
Wisconsin Wildlife Federation
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